

Electoral behaviour in the Kraków metropolitan area: 1993–2011

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Abstract. The purpose of the paper is to describe changes in support for the four principal political options ('right', 'left', 'liberal', 'peasant') available in the Kraków Metropolitan Area (KMA) in parliamentary elections in the period 1993–2011. The electoral behaviour of the residents of the various KMA zones became increasingly similar in the study period. The political 'distance' between the northern commuter zone of the KMA (part of the Russian partition in the 19th c.) and the rest of the KMA, decreased significantly. The suburban zone of Kraków also changed over the course of the study period by becoming significantly similar to the city in terms of voting behaviour. This political change was largely due to substantial social and economic changes in the rural parts of the metropolitan area. Urban areas in the KMA were much more stable in their voting patterns and tended to politically resemble one another much more than rural areas. The city of Kraków and the southern part of its commuter zone – part of the Austrian partition in the 19th c. – were characterized by fewer fluctuations in voting behaviour than the two remaining parts of the KMA.

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1. Introduction

The academic discipline of electoral geography in Poland emerged after 1989 when free and democratic elections were held and an objective analysis of election results became possible from a political point of view. From the very beginning, the electoral behaviour of Polish citizens varied strongly in spatial terms. Most research papers in electoral geography published over the last 25 years have addressed the country as a whole, discussing historical and cultural determinants, and the effects of social and economic changes, as key sources of spatial differentiation in the realm of political preferences in Poland (Matykowski et al., 1995; Kowalski, 2000; Krzemiński, 2009; Raciborski, 1997; Węclawowicz, 1995; Zarycki, 1997, 2000; Zarycki, Nowak, 2000).

A number of research papers describe internal urban differences in electoral behaviour (Węclawowicz, 1994; Sobczyński, 2000; Kavetsky, 2004, 2005). However, studies of internal political differences for entire metropolitan areas in Poland are not available. Some papers on Poland as a whole touch upon this issue, but go no further. The largest Polish metropolitan areas (and areas close to them) are treated collectively and identified as bastions of 'liberal' support and areas of very high voter turnout. The reasons cited for this state of affairs are the high levels of education and income of metropolitan area residents. However, internal issues are not analysed and entire metropolitan areas are treated as nearly homogeneous.

The issue of spatial differentiation in electoral behaviour in the Kraków Metropolitan Area was discussed indirectly in papers on residents of Małopolskie Voivodeship (Haydukiewicz, 2011; Trzepacz, Warych-Juras, 2009). The conclusions provided in these papers match those provided on national-level issues. The city of Kraków and its surrounding suburban zone are characterized by a higher voter turnout than non-metropolitan areas as well as higher support for the 'liberal option'. This outcome is linked with the process of suburbanization and the influx of better-educated and wealthier Kraków residents into these areas. Research has also shown that support for 'right-wing' and 'peasant' parties increases with distance from Kraków city boundaries.

As for other Central European post-communist countries, the state of socio-political urban-rural fractured has been analysed in Hungary by Körösenyi (1999), in the Czech Republic by Kostelecký & Čermák (2004) and Kostelecký (2005), and in Slovakia by Plešivčák (2013).

The largest body of research on electoral behaviour in large metropolitan areas is available mostly in the United States (Hodge, Staebeli, 1992; Sauerzopf, Swannstrom, 1999; Gainsborough, 2001, 2005). Greater support for the country's Republican Party (the rough equivalent of the European 'right wing') is noted in metropolitan counties located farther away from the urban core. These are characterized by less racial and ethnic diversity and by the presence of large numbers of traditional families and higher-income households. In the case of the Democratic Party (or the rough equivalent of the European 'left wing'), the core area of support consists of the primary metropolitan city with its lower-income residents and greater racial and ethnic diversity. Studies also show that the rate of population growth is higher in suburban areas – against central cities – and this pattern favours the Republican Party.

Political opposition between conservative suburbs and radical central areas is also noted in Canada (Walks, 2004a, 2004b, 2005a, 2006), Great Britain (Cox, 1968; Biel, 1972; Walks, 2005b), and Australia (Forrest et al., 1984; Johnston, Forrest, 1985). In addition to the work on English-speaking countries, research on differentiation in political preferences in large metropolitan areas has also been done in France (Ravenel et al., 2003; Bussi et al., 2004; Rivière, 2008), Netherlands (Passchier, van der Wusten, 1990), and Belgium (De Maesschalck, 2009). Other Western European countries (Switzerland, Germany, Spain and Sweden) were the subject of such an analysis in Sellers et al. (2013).

The purpose of the paper is to discuss changes in the electoral behaviour of residents of the Kraków Metropolitan Area (KMA) in parliamentary (*Sejm*) (1) elections in the period 1993–2011. Fluctuations in support for various political options in the KMA may be viewed in the context of what the social sciences call the political and cultural convergence in society. This school of thinking suggests that over time, the process of modernization in the form of industrialization and urbanization leads to a society

with homogeneous electoral preferences (Campbell et al., 1966; Lipset, Rokkan, 1967; Cox, 1969; Hof-ferbert, Sharkansky, 1971; Caramani, 2005).

Supporters of this view point to the U.S. South as an example of this form of political evolution. The American South was a distinct geographic region in the United States roughly until the 1960s, known as an area of cultural conservatism. The emergence of national media as well as better transportation options, including domestic airlines and the interstate highway system in the years following World War II, have helped create a national American public opinion and lessened political differences between different geographical regions. In effect, the South is now a region with a more ‘national’ electoral behaviour than just a few decades ago (Ansolabehere et al., 2006). The *convergence of societies* is a philosophy that is rather popular in the American and British research literature and applies mainly to Western societies.

In the case of Poland, this philosophy of ‘national’ electoral behaviour would need to manifest itself in gradual reductions in differences in voting patterns between the different parts of the country

located within the three former partitions. Many issues in Poland are related to its history and this includes more than a century of foreign occupation including the entire 19th century when Russia, Prussia, and Austria each controlled a part of the country. A change towards ‘national’ electoral behaviour would apply first and foremost to rural areas where each partition has produced a different voting pattern and different political preferences.

2. Study area and materials

The boundaries of the Kraków Metropolitan Area (KMA) used in this paper are those provided by Zborowski (2010). The KMA features 53 *gminas* (2) including the main urban centre of Kraków as well as ‘outer’ ones that include a suburban zone (11) and a commuter zone (41) (Fig. 1). The metropolitan area totals 4,300 km² and is inhabited by about 1.5 million people. The KMA is ranked third in Poland after the capital region of Warsaw and the Upper Silesian Metropolitan Area.



Fig. 1. Kraków Metropolitan Area

Source: Author's own work based on Zborowski et al., 2010

For the purpose of this paper, the commuter zone was divided into the northern part from the former Russian partition, and the southern part from the former Austrian partition. The same is true of the city's suburban zone but it is treated as homogeneous due to its relative political homogeneity, unlike the situation in the commuter zone where national history plays a key role. All calculations for both the suburban zone and each part of the commuter zone differentiate between urban and rural areas. The division into urban and rural areas is made on the basis of an administrative criterion (according to the Central Statistical Office of Poland).

The political preferences of the inhabitants of the KMA were analysed using election data for the Sejm (parliament) in 1993, 1997, 2001, 2005, 2007, and 2011. Data on the elections of 1991 were omitted due to the very large number of political parties created by the lack of the electoral threshold normally set by electoral law as well as the difficulty in assigning the multitude of parties to specific political options (political orientations). Election data were provided by Poland's National Electoral Commission.

In the KMA, the philosophy of 'national' electoral behaviour would apply mostly to reductions in differences in political preferences and voting patterns between the former Russian partition (northern commuter zone) and the former Austri-

an partition or the city itself as well as its suburbs and the southern commuter zone.

3. Dimensions of the Polish political scene

The introduction of democratic elections to the political scene in Poland in the early 1990s revealed the existence of two fundamental political axes. The first axis (of values) is linked with conservative traditions. The second axis (of interests) is linked with industrialization, urbanization, education, and wealth (Zarycki, 2008). This led to a confrontation of values between the anti-communist right and the post-communist left – given that the previous dividing line had divided Polish citizens into pro- and anti-communist. This also sparked a confrontation of interests between political parties with different economic interests (regulated vs. liberal economies). One side represented urban interests and a free-market electorate, the other represented rural electorates often supporting the redistribution of income and government intervention in the markets. Most researchers agree that two fundamental political axes govern the political scene in Poland, both in the economic and cultural sense. The outcome can be described as four primary political options or orientations ('right', 'left', 'liberal', 'peasant') (Fig. 2).

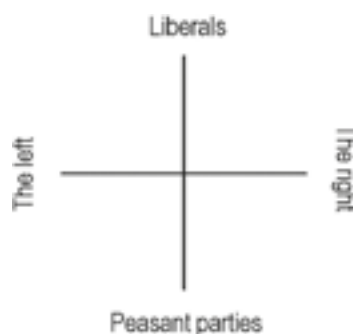


Fig. 2. The four principal political options in Poland and their relations

Source: Kowalski, 2000

This paper employs a description of the Polish political scene by Kowalski (2000) which is based on a classification system introduced by Żukowski (1993). The following four political op-

tions are provided by this classification system: (1) right-wing/Christian, (2) liberal/democratic, (3) left-wing/post-communist, (4) peasant/rural/raditional.

It is important to add, however, that the political scene in Poland, as in many other Central and Eastern European countries, has evolved since the 1990s, and that the relationship between the cultural and economic axes has become more complex. In the early 2000s the political influence of the post-communist left in Poland started to diminish. The reasons for this were not only poor governance and corruption scandals of the left-wing government, but also the weakening of the so-called post-communist divide, as issues related to the communist past started to be of less importance for the voters. As a result, a new political division emerged in Poland. On one side of the political spectrum there is the culturally conservative, pro-redistributive and Eurosceptic Law and Justice (PiS), whereas on the other there is the relatively culturally more liberal, pro-market and pro-European Civic Platform (PO). The weakened post-communist left and the peasant PSL are politically closer to the liberals than to the right-wing. PSL also remains the most pro-redistributive political party in Poland.

It is the concept of values that is more important in Poland and in other CEE countries than in many Western countries where voters focus primarily on economic issues.

Significant differences exist in the way that the eastern and the western parts of Europe define the concepts of liberalism and conservatism and relate to them. In the case of Western Europe, economic conservatism is often linked with cultural conservatism and economic liberalism is often linked with cultural liberalism. In the case of Central and Eastern Europe, economic conservatism is often linked with cultural liberalism and economic liberalism is often linked with cultural conservatism (Kitschelt, 1992; Marks et al., 2006; Vachudova, Hooghe, 2009). This state of affairs is widely associated with the legacy of communist rule in the CEE countries which has produced the persistent connection between authoritarianism and opposition to capitalism. After the collapse of the communist regimes, supporters of liberal democracy and a market-oriented economy emerged on opposite sides of the political spectrum. As a result, the axis of political competition in the east of Europe is very different from that of the west. Some authors argue, however, that even though this state of affairs may have been true in the 1990s, the

post-communist world has changed so significantly over the last two decades that today a visible convergence between Eastern and Western European political systems can be observed. This particularly concerns the Visegrad Four and Slovenia (Hloušek, Kopeček, 2010). Other authors take a more moderate position, arguing that Central and Eastern Europe is a distinctive political region in general, but with some exceptions i.e. countries where political systems resemble those of the West (the Czech Republic, Slovenia, Macedonia, Latvia and Estonia) (Rovny, 2014).

The assignment of political groups to specific political options for selected elections to the Sejm is shown in Table 1. The liberal option includes political parties originating in the country's liberal wing of the pro-democracy movement born in the 1980s while the right wing includes groups linked with the conservative wing. The left-wing option is represented mostly by parties originating in the 'reform' wing of the now non-existent Polish United Workers' Party (mostly the present-day SLD), while the 'peasant' option or farmers' party is known as PSL (a replacement for ZSL – one of its satellite parties). Poland's right-wing parties and liberal parties are often called the 'post-Solidarity' option, while left-wing parties and 'peasant' parties are often called the 'post-communist' option (3).

4. Political preferences of the inhabitants of the Kraków Metropolitan Area in the period 1993–2011 by geographic area

In 1993, the city of Kraków stood out relative to all other parts of the KMA in terms of its political support for the liberal (33.7%) and the left-wing (25.3%), and had the lowest political support for the peasant option (2.8%) (Table 2). The suburban and the southern commuter zones of the KMA were characterized by the highest political support for the right-wing option (44.5% and 45.1%, respectively), which made them similar in orientation. However, the political distance (4) between the suburban zone and the city of Kraków was much smaller (36.3 percentage points) than that of the southern commuter zone (49.7 percentage points)

Table 1. Assignment of Polish political parties to the four principal political options in parliamentary elections in the period 1993–2011

Election year	The right	The left	Liberals	Peasant parties
1993	Centre Alliance (PC)	Democratic Left Alliance (SLD)	Liberal Democratic Congress (KLD)	Polish Peasant Party (PSL)
	Catholic Coalition 'Fatherland' (KKW 'Ojczyzna')	Labour Union (UP)		
	Polish Peasant Party – Peasant Accord (PSL-PL)	Party X (Partia X)	Democratic Union (UD)	
	Confederation of Independent Poland (KPN)		Real Policy Union (UPR)	
	'Solidarity' (NSZZ „Solidarność")			
1997	Nonpartisan Bloc for Support of Reforms (BBWR)			
	Coalition for the Republic (KdR)			
	Bloc for Poland (BdP)	Democratic Left Alliance (SLD)	Freedom Union (UW)	Polish Peasant Party (PSL)
	National Agreement of Retired Persons and Pensioners of the Polish Republic (KPEiR RP)	Labour Union (UP)	Union of the Republic's Right (UPRz)	
	'Solidarity' Electoral Action (AWS)	National Party of Retirees and Pensioners (KPEiR)		
2001	Movement for the Reconstruction of Poland (ROP)			
	Law and Justice (PiS)	Democratic Left Alliance-Labour Union (SLD-UP)	Civic Platform (PO)	Polish Peasant Party (PSL)
	League of Polish Families (LPR)		Freedom Union (UW)	
	'Solidarity' Electoral Action (AWS)			
	Law and Justice (PiS)	Democratic Left Alliance (SLD)	Civic Platform (PO)	Polish Peasant Party (PSL)
2005	League of Polish Families (LPR)	Polish Social Democracy (SdPi)	Democratic Party (PD)	
	Patriotic Movement (RP)	'Self-Defence' (Samoobrona)	Janusz Korwin-Mikke Platform (PJKM)	
		Polish Labour Party (PPP)		
	Law and Justice (PiS)	Left and Democrats (LiD)	Civic Platform (PO)	Polish Peasant Party (PSL)
	League of Polish Families (LPR)	'Self Defence' (Samoobrona)		
2007		Women's Party (PK)		
		Polish Labour Party (PPP)		
	Law and Justice (PiS)	Democratic Left Alliance (SLD)	Civic Platform (PO)	Polish Peasant Party (PSL)
	Poland Comes First (PiN)	'Self Defence' (Samoobrona)	Palikot Movement (RP)	
	The Right (Prawica)	Polish Labour Party (PPP)	New Right of Janusz Korwin-Mikke (NP)	

Source: Author's work based on Kowalski, 2000

due to the higher support for the liberals and lower for the 'peasants'. In 1993, the northern commuter zone featured an exceptionally strong political support for the 'peasant' option (46.2%) and the lowest

for the right wing (27.4%) and the liberals (9.2%) – and differed strongly from all other parts of the KMA (a difference of 86.7 percentage points in relation to Kraków).

Table 2. Percentage-point change in political distance between Kraków and remaining KMA zones in parliamentary elections in the period 1993–2011

A	Kraków		Suburban		N. Commuter		S. Commuter	
	B	C	C	D	C	D	C	D
1993	Right	37.7	44.5	6.8	27.4	10.2	45.1	7.5
	Left	25.3	17.1	8.2	16.7	8.6	15.9	9.4
	Liberal	33.7	23.8	9.9	9.2	24.5	18.3	15.4
	Peasant	2.8	14.2	11.3	46.2	43.4	20.3	17.4
2011				36.3		86.7		49.7
	Right	31.0	38.9	7.9	39.2	8.2	49.8	18.8
	Left	5.1	4.5	0.6	6.6	1.5	5.4	0.3
	Liberal	61.4	50.7	10.7	32.2	29.2	37.7	23.7
1993–2011	Peasant	2.5	5.9	3.4	22.0	19.4	7.1	4.6
				22.6		58.3		47.4
	Right			+1.0		–2.0		+11.4
	Left			–7.6		–7.1		–9.1
1993–2011	Liberal			+0.8		+4.7		+8.3
	Peasant			–7.9		–23.9		–12.8
				–13.7		–28.3		–2.3

Explanation: A – year, B – political option, C – electoral result (%), D – political distance from Kraków (absolute values, percentage points)

Source: Author's own calculations based on Zborowski *et al.*, 2010 and National Electoral Commission data

In the period 1993–2011, the largest changes in political views (the highest level of Pedersen's index of electoral volatility) (5) were noted for the northern commuter zone (19.1%) as well as the subur-

ban zone (17.6%) (Table 3). In this sense, the city of Kraków and its southern commuter zone were characterized by greater stability (13.2% and 16.8%, respectively).

Table 3. Pedersen's Index of between-bloc electoral volatility in the KMA in parliamentary elections in the years 1993–2011 (%)

	1993–1997	1997–2001	2001–2005	2005–2007	2007–2011	1993–2011 Mean
Kraków	8.2	12.3	22.1	14.3	9.0	13.2
Suburban zone	14.8	24.8	28.5	11.6	8.4	17.6
Northern commuter zone	14.4	26.9	27.2	16.3	10.8	19.1
Southern commuter zone	17.0	27.4	22.6	11.0	6.0	16.8
Suburban zone (urban areas)	11.4	18.6	26.7	13.5	7.7	15.6
Suburban zone (rural areas)	16.2	27.4	29.2	10.8	9.0	18.5
N. commuter zone (urban areas)	5.0	19.7	29.0	12.9	8.6	15.0
N. commuter zone (rural areas)	19.5	30.6	25.7	20.3	12.2	21.7
S. commuter zone (urban areas)	14.3	21.7	22.2	14.2	6.9	15.9
S. commuter zone (rural areas)	19.0	29.7	22.9	10.7	5.3	17.5

Source: Author's own calculation based on Zborowski *et al.*, 2010 and National Electoral Commission data

These changes resulted in a significant decrease in differences between the electoral behaviour of the residents of different parts of the KMA in the years 1993–2011. The largest reduction in political distance from the city of Kraków was observed in the northern commuter zone (–28.3 percentage points). This was followed

by a smaller reduction in the suburban zone (–13.7 percentage points) and the smallest in the southern commuter zone (–2.3 percentage points).

The most important periods of reduction were 1993–2001, with respect to the suburban and the southern commuter zones, and 1993–97 and 2001–07 with respect to the northern zone (Fig. 3).

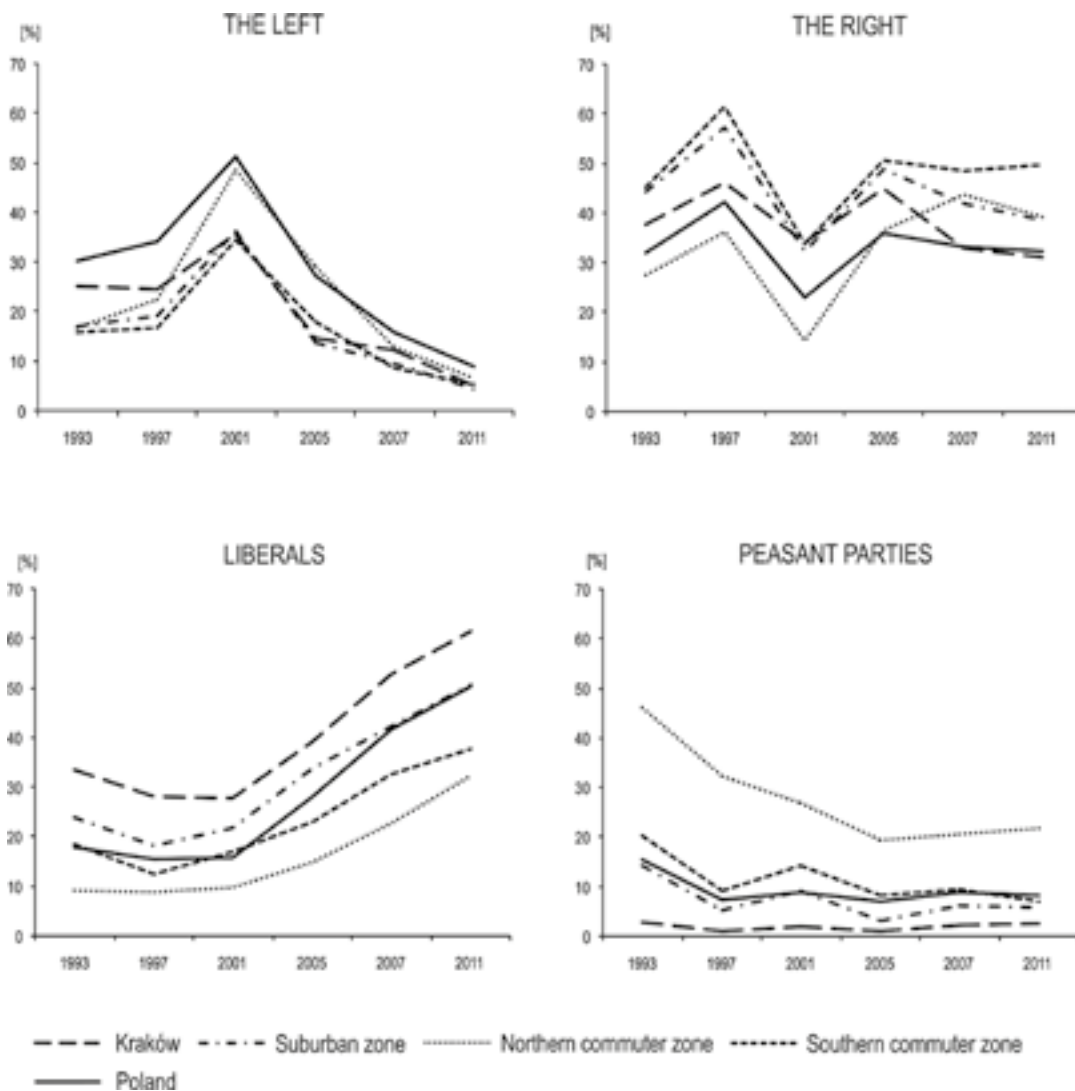


Fig. 3. Change in electoral support for the four principal political options in the KMA in the period 1993–2011

Source: Author's own calculation based on Zborowski et al., 2010 and National Electoral Commission data

Despite a more significant political transformation over the last years and the largest reduction in political distance with respect to other areas of the KMA, the northern commuter zone stands out in terms of the political views of its residents. Support for the liberal option in the zone is the lowest in

the KMA (32.2%), while support for the left-wing option and the peasant option is the highest (6.6% and 22.0%, respectively). Support for the right wing in this zone is at a level close to that of the suburban zone (39.2%).

5. Political preferences of the inhabitants of the Kraków Metropolitan Area in the period 1993–2011 in an urban-rural context

In the period 1993–2011, the Kraków Metropolitan Area as a whole experienced a significant decrease

in differences between the political preferences of its urban residents and rural residents. Every KMA zone experienced this decrease, as did every political option, although it occurred in different ways and affected each option to a different extent (Table 4, Fig. 4).

Table 4. Percentage-point change in political distance between urban and rural areas in the KMA in parliamentary elections in the period 1993–2011

A	B	Suburban zone			Northern commuter zone			Southern commuter zone		
		urban	rural	D	urban	rural	D	urban	rural	D
		C	C		C	C		C	C	
1993	Right	41.2	45.7	4.5	34.2	24.6	9.6	40.3	47.1	6.8
	Left	21.4	15.4	6.0	26.2	12.8	13.4	23.5	12.7	10.8
	Liberal	33.1	20.3	12.8	19.7	4.9	14.7	28.9	13.9	15.0
	Peasant	3.9	18.1	14.2	19.4	57.2	37.8	6.9	25.9	19.0
2011				37.5			75.5			51.6
	Right	37.5	39.8	2.2	39.7	39.1	0.6	41.6	53.5	12.0
	Left	4.6	4.5	0.1	6.6	6.5	0.1	6.6	4.8	1.8
	Liberal	55.8	48.8	7.0	40.3	28.8	11.5	48.2	33.0	15.2
1993–2011	Peasant	3.2	7.0	3.8	13.4	25.6	12.2	3.7	8.7	5.0
				13.1			24.4			33.9
	Right			–2.2			–8.9			+5.1
	Left			–5.9			–13.3			–9.0
	Liberal			–5.8			–3.2			+0.2
	Peasant			–10.5			–25.6			–14.0
				–24.5						–17.7

Explanation: A – year, B – political option, C – electoral result (%), D – political distance between urban and rural areas within a given zone (absolute values, percentage points)

Source: Author's own calculation based on Zborowski *et al.*, 2010 and National Electoral Commission data

In the context of the four available political options, the most significant city versus rural area differences were observed in the northern commuter zone in the early 1990s (75.5 percentage points). These differences were smaller in the southern commuter zone (51.6) and smallest in the suburbs (37.5). In the years 1993–2011, the largest decreases in city versus rural area differences were noted in the northern commuter zone of the KMA (–51.1 percentage points). This was followed by smaller decreases in the suburban (–24.5) and the smallest in the southern commuter zone (–17.7). By 2011, the smallest urban versus rural differences were still

found in the KMA suburban zone (13.1 percentage points), followed by the northern commuter (24.4), with the largest differences noted in the southern zone (33.9).

In 1993, the areas closest to the city of Kraków, in terms of electoral behaviour, were urban areas of the suburban and the southern commuter zones (9.0- and 13.3-percentage-point difference in relation to Kraków, respectively) (Table 5). Urban areas in the northern commuter zone were much more politically distant (35.0). The next closest to the city were rural areas in the suburban zone (46.6) and in the city's southern commuter zone (64.9).

The greatest political distance between Kraków and its surrounding areas was noted in 1993 with

respect to rural areas in the northern commuter zone (108.7).

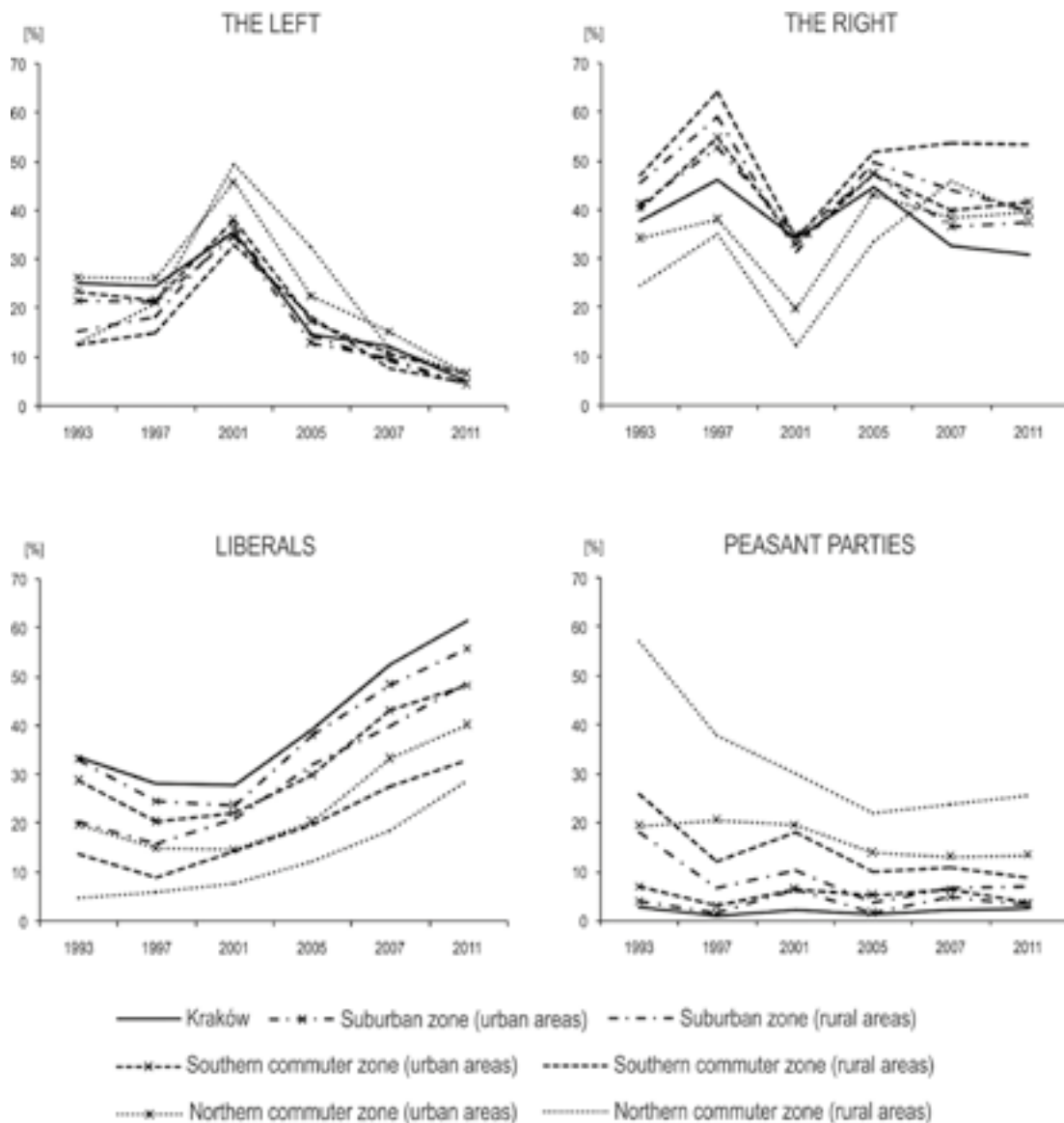


Fig. 4. Change in electoral support for the four principal political options in the KMA in the period 1993–2011 in the urban-rural context

Source: Author's own calculation based on Zborowski et al., 2010 and National Electoral Commission data

Over the period 1993–2011, changes in the electoral behaviour of the residents of the KMA were much more pronounced in the case of rural than urban areas. The greatest changes in political preference occurred among the rural residents of the northern commuter zone (the average score of Pedersen's index of electoral volatility for this period is 21.7%), followed by smaller changes in the subur-

ban zone (18.5%) and the smallest in the southern commuter zone (17.5%).

This political evolution resulted in altered relationships between the various zones of the KMA. In 2011, the smallest political distance was still found between the city of Kraków and towns in its suburban zone (13.3-percentage-point difference). Rural areas in the Kraków suburban and towns in the

Table 5. Percentage-point changes in political distance between Kraków and remaining KMA zones in parliamentary elections in the period 1993–2011 in the urban-rural context

A	B	Kraków	Suburban		Suburban		N. Commuter		N. Commuter		S. Commuter		S. Commuter	
			(urban areas)		(rural areas)		(urban areas)		(rural areas)		(urban areas)		(rural areas)	
		C	C	D	C	D	C	D	C	D	C	D	C	D
1993	Right	37.7	41.2	3.6	45.7	8.1	34.2	3.5	24.6	13.0	40.3	2.6	47.1	9.5
	Left	25.3	21.4	3.9	15.4	9.9	26.2	0.9	12.8	12.5	23.5	1.8	12.7	12.6
	Liberal	33.7	33.1	0.6	20.3	13.4	19.7	14.1	4.9	28.8	28.9	4.8	13.9	19.8
	Peasant	2.8	3.9	1.0	18.1	15.3	19.4	16.6	57.2	54.4	6.9	4.1	25.9	23.0
2011				9.0		46.6		35.0		108.7		13.3		64.9
	Right	31.0	37.5	6.5	39.8	8.7	39.7	8.7	39.1	8.0	41.6	10.6	53.5	22.5
	Left	5.1	4.6	0.5	4.5	0.6	6.6	1.5	6.5	1.5	6.6	1.5	4.8	0.3
	Liberal	61.4	55.8	5.6	48.8	12.6	40.3	21.1	28.8	32.6	48.2	13.2	33.0	28.4
1993– –2011	Peasant	2.5	3.2	0.7	7.0	4.4	13.4	10.9	25.6	23.1	3.7	1.2	8.7	6.2
				13.3		26.4		42.3		65.3		26.4		57.4
	Right			+2.9		+0.7		+5.2		–5.0		+7.9		+13.1
	Left			–3.3		–9.3		+0.6		–11.0		–0.3		–12.3
	Liberal			+5.0		–0.8		+7.1		+3.8		+8.4		+8.6
	Peasant			–0.3		–10.8		–5.7		–31.3		–2.9		–16.9
				+4.3		–20.2		+7.2		–43.4		+13.1		–7.6

Explanation: A – year, B – political option, C – electoral result (%), D – political distance from Kraków (absolute values, percentage points)

Source: Author's own calculation based on Zborowski *et al.*, 2010 and National Electoral Commission data

southern commuter zones were both a close second in this respect (26.4). These were followed by towns in the northern commuter zone (42.3). Rural areas in the northern commuter zone changed most over the course of the study period and experienced the largest decrease in political distance relative to every other KMA zone. In spite of these major changes, rural areas in the northern commuter zone remain the most politically distinct parts of the KMA (57.4-percentage-point difference).

6. Conclusion

A notable conclusion of this paper is that the four geographic zones of the Kraków Metropolitan Area have come to resemble one another to a meaningful degree in terms of electoral behaviour between 1993 and 2011. It is worth noting the significant convergence between the political preferences of the northern part of the commuter zone, located in the former Russian partition, and the other zones of the

KMA. The suburban zone of the city has also experienced substantial change leading to its current political resemblance to the city itself. This political change occurred primarily in rural metropolitan areas.

Urban areas located in the KMA were characterized by far greater stability in terms of electoral behaviour over the course of the study period. In addition, their political preferences were more similar than those identified across rural areas of the KMA. The city of Kraków as well as its southern commuter zone (formerly part of the Austrian partition) tended to be more stable in terms of political preferences than the two remaining KMA zones. In summary, differences in political preferences between Kraków, its entire suburban area, and towns in the southern commuter zone are rather small nowadays.

The findings of this paper are consistent to a significant extent with the results of research on electoral behaviour in metropolitan areas in other Central European countries. In his study, Kostelecký (2005) notes that in the most economically

advanced Czech metropolitan areas a trend towards more homogenous electoral preferences can be observed between city cores and their suburban zones with regard to the voters' support for pro-market political parties. In the KMA, this trend is found as well: the political distance of rural areas from the city of Kraków in the KMA's suburban zone was reduced with respect to the pro-market liberal option. Plešivčák (2013) in his research analyses the level and dynamics of socio-political urban-rural cleavage in Slovakia in the years 1998–2010. In its conclusions, the study indicates that even though the degree of socio-political conflict between urban and rural communities in the largest Slovakian cities is higher than average, it is significantly declining. According to both authors these unification trends can be explained by the process of suburbanization and the migration of better-educated and wealthier residents from the city cores to the suburban areas.

In terms of the Western trend towards 'national' political preferences, it appears that the residents of the Kraków Metropolitan Area may serve as proof that this novel pattern can be also found in Poland. The political preferences of the residents of the post-Russian and the post-Austrian parts of the KMA seem to have converged in many ways during the study period. This trend towards more homogeneous electoral behaviour is most observable in areas where differences were the greatest (rural areas). This prompts the basic question: Is this a permanent phenomenon? Despite significant changes in political preferences in rural areas located in the post-Russian part, these areas remain the most politically distinct across the KMA.

Notes

- (1) *The Sejm* is the lower house of the Polish Parliament.
- (2) *Gmina* is the administrative region of the 3rd order.
- (3) *Solidarity* was originally a non-communist workers' union that consolidated the country's opposition to communism and helped pave the way for democratic elections in 1990.
- (4) The political distance between Kraków and other KMA zones is calculated as a sum of abso-

lute differences in electoral results of all four political options between Kraków and KMA zones. For example, the political distance between Kraków and the suburban zone in 1993 was equal to 36.3 percentage points (6.8-percentage-point difference in the case of the right-wing option, +8.2 in the case of the left-wing, +9.9 in the case of the liberal, +11.3 in the case of the peasant).

- (5) The Pedersen index is calculated as a sum of absolute changes in electoral results between two elections divided by two. In this paper, the Pedersen index is measured at the level of blocs of parties (right-wing, left-wing, liberal and peasant), not at the level of individual parties.

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